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A Story of Utah.

SERIES

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FOUNDED ON FACT.

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IT was many years ago, when the idea of a railroad across the deserts and plains of the Great West, was, if talked of at all, considered by most people as a wild and impossible scheme, and when our government made but a feeble effort to resist the growing power of Brigham Young, that, one sunny August day, a long train of emigrant wagons took their way southward through the broad streets of Mormon Zion, Salt Lake City.

We seldom see such wagons now. I remember when I was a child, how queer they looked to me. They were seemingly so large and unwieldly. The sides of their deep boxes curved down in the middle, with high back and front; ribs of hickory were bent, bow fashion, across the bed, and over this was stretched the cover of white canvas. I used to stand by the bars down in the lane, and watch them till they disappeared from sight, wondering how the children enjoyed living in a wagon. I remember that some called them prairie schooners; they were so large and their white tops seemed to sail slowly away in the distance westward, over the prairies.

In the train, which we are mentally watching, there was an unusual number of these wagons, and much good stock, and more than forty fami-

lies · men, women and dear little children who had come from far away eastern homes, and were bound for the ancient city of Los Angeles in southern California.

They had been long months on the way, had crossed rivers, mountains and desert places, and many miles—part of which was a weary desert waste—still lay between them and the land of orange blossoms whither they journeyed. Slowly they passed out of sight of the Mormon city, and from the view of the wicked men who coveted their wagons, stock and goods, and hated them because they were true citizens of the nation—honest Christian men and women.

Slowly the long train crossed Utah till three hundred miles lay between them and its capital; but still they were surrounded by Indians and Mormons.

So traveling on, one sunset found them on the borders of a beautiful grassy plain, five miles long and one mile wide, near the southern boundary of which was a large spring of clear cool water.

Here the emigrants decided to camp and remain a few days to rest their stock and refresh themselves before starting across the great desert.

You may be sure the children were delighted with the prospect of playing for days in this pleasant meadow. Among them was a blue-eyed, fair-haired, little girl, whom you may think of as Fannie Gray. She was only twelve years old, and dearly loved to run and play, and was tired of riding day after day in the ugly old wagon. She had been obliged to leave her kitty, bird, chickens and ever so many playthings back in the States, because there was not room for unnecessary things in the wagon. But to-night for some reason, Fannie soon tired of play, and after the supper was over, she sat quietly on the grass and

watched the stars come out, thinking curious thoughts about them. Away over, seemingly above the edge of the meadow, was such a beautiful one, and she thought how nice it was to be a star and always look pretty, shining up in the sky close to God, and never have to ride in an old wagon for months, and eat the same things and sometimes not have enough water to drink. When she grew up, she was never, never, going to travel in a wagon. She was sure mother would be so glad to have a house to live in once more, that she would never wish to move again, either. But father said that they would soon have a home now. She wished it would be to-morrow.

Ah! little Fannie, you did not know how that wish was to be granted, nor what a beautiful home would be yours when the stars should shine out to-morrow night.

Early the next morning Fannie went skipping along the meadow to the spring, carrying a small pail for fresh water for breakfast. Suddenly she thought she heard a step behind her and turning to see which one of her comrades it might be, she faced a young man whom she had never seen before, standing near with his gun pointed at her. She dropped the bucket and clasping her hands in an agony of fear, called: "Oh! father, father! But the cruel hand was on the trigger of the gun and before the pitiful cry had reached the father's ear, the soul of sweet Fannie Gray had passed beyond the star, and was at home with Jesus.

When the star looked down a few nights later it longed for a cloud to hide from its view the dreadful sight upon the rocky boundary line of the plain below.

The emigrant wagons and stock had disappeared from the grassy meadow. No camp fire sparkled there that night, but the rocks upon its edge

were covered with blood, the low bushes trampled and broken, and the ghastly, bruised and bleeding faces of more than a hundred dead emigrants offered a mute appeal to God for vengeance on their Mormon murderers.

Years passed away. The idea of a railroad across the western wilds to the Pacific coast had developed, and become an established fact, a great and wonderful means of transportation for men and merchandise. The curse of Mormonism still burdened Utah and it remained a Territory among a host of young, prosperous western States. But within its boundaries, hundreds of true men with their families had come to dwell. There were men loyal to the United States Government, which had assumed the authority befitting so great a power, and dishonor and murder had received a partial check.

Besides these loyal families, there had come into Utah and the adjoining Territories, many unselfish, consecreted, I might almost say heroic, women, whose mission was the education and salvation of the Mormon children. And in towns, hamlets and wayside places, often alone and beset by difficulties that would dishearten any save daughters of the King, they established schools, built chapels and made homes where the children found instruction, purity and love unknown in their own homes.

Fannie Gray had been at home, dwelling in the mansion prepared by the Saviour for those who love Him, sweetly resting from her wearisome ride for more than thirty years, when one of these gentle home missionaries, teaching in a small town where there were but few Gentiles (as the Mormons call those not of their faith), desired to make some change in the little room adjoining the one where she lived, and which she used as

her schoolroom. To do the work she hired a carpenter whom they told her was a Mormon by birth, but lately had been suspected of being an apostate. He thought it would take but a short time to make the necessary alterations which he engaged to do after school closed for the day. It still wanted a few minutes of the appointed time when he arrived bringing the needful material with him. He was apparently an old man, yet the lines upon his face seemed not all caused by time and toil, and his eyes had a restless, almost haunted look, that had at once attracted the teacher's attention and rather disturbed her.

So necessary is it for mission teachers to use all kinds of opportunities to reach the people among whom they work, that this teacher rejoiced that the carpenter's early arrival would compel him to hear a part of the closing lesson, which was a recitation of Bible verses by a class of small children, though she mentally wished that it was from a part of the Scripture more likely to arrest his attention. Believing child of God though she was, she just then forgot that if this necessity of her's was God's chosen opportunity, he had so ordered the lesson. She gave the man as comfortable a seat as possible and proceeded with the recitation.

"Now Jessie," said she, "you may give your verse." And almost facing the carpenter a fair, blue-eyed little girl stood up and in clear unbroken tones repeated the sixth commandment,—"Thou shalt not kill."

A half-suppressed groan escaped the old man's lips; and he hid his face in his hands. Quickly and quietly the teacher dismissed the children. Then standing besides the man she questioned him as to what pained him. For many minutes he answered not, and again in a firm, gentle man-

ner she asked him what had hurt him At last he raised a face full of anguish, that bore testimony to his words.

"My heart and conscience hurt me," he said, "I am cursed of God! there is blood, innocent blood, upon my hands. From whence came that child, and why did she repeat that verse to me?"

"She is the daughter of a gentile living in the town; the verse was a part of her lesson. Why did she or the Scripture trouble you?"

Then he told her that, more than thirty years before, in obedience to the command of the Mormon bishop, he had shot just such a fair, blue-eyed child, as she went for water to the spring at Mountain Meadow. It was his only deed of blood; he had refused to shoot again, but of late the thought of it had almost crazed him. The pitiful cry of the child for her father was ever sounding in his memory; and when this child to-day, so like the other one, rose there before him, it seemed as if the dead had come to life, and was repeating to him God's law which he had broken. This trouble was wearing out his life, and how was he to die with that child's blood upon him, for which he could make no atonement?

Then the fair soldier of Christ, whose Christian armour was always bright and ready for service, took up in behalf of this captive of sin, the Sword of the Spirit. From the word of God she read to him of a perfect atonement made for the sins of the world; showed to him a sympathising crucified and risen Saviour; repeated to him many promises which God had sent through his servants, the prophets, to the repentant among the erring ones of earth.

The shadows of evening fell, the carpenter's work was still untouched, but into his troubled soul had dawned a hope of forgiveness and rest.

Sweet was the promise he heard from the prophet, that the crimson stains should all be cleansed; soothing to his troubled heart was David's testimony that the Lord forgiveth all iniquities; most blessed of all, those words of pardon and acceptance spoken from the cross to a repentant thief, perhaps a murderer as wicked as himself.

He left his work till another day, but carried home with him a chart, the blessed Word of God, which, if well studied, would guide him in the way of building a new and better life, although the years still left to him in which to build, were, alas! all to few to complete it in strength and symmetry.

And the teacher kneeling in that dark, half-furnished, wholly unattractive schoolroom, thanked God that little Fannie Gray had not died in vain, and praised him for the joy that comes to those who truly serve Him, even though the service be that of a lonely Home Missionary.

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